AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Original) A method of conducting a bidding session, comprising the steps of:

establishing a communications channel between a bidding session server and a web browser residing on a remote terminal;

transmitting bidding session status information from said bidding session server to said web browser via said communications channel;

receiving a bid from said web browser via said communications channel; and

in response to receiving said bid, transmitting an update of said bidding session status information to at least one web browser residing on at least one remote terminal, wherein said update has not been requested by said at least one web browser.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the duration of said bidding session is automatically extended a predetermined period of time in response to the receipt of said bid by said bidding session server.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein said predetermined period of time is specified by a bidding session supervisor component.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said bidding session status information comprises data representative of at least one of the following:

a bidding session sponsor,

a bidding session objective,

a bidding session format,

a bidding session date,

a bidding session timer,

a product being put to bid,

a product specification,

a required quantity,

a contract duration,

a contract delivery requirement,

a contract performance penalty,

a starting bid,

a last bid,

a bidding rank,

a bidding unit,

a minimum bid increment,

a start time for bidding,

an end time for bidding,

a new bid time extension value,

whether bid values are hidden,

a current bidding round number,

a number of total bidding rounds,

a number of bidders,

a bidder identification, and

a bidding history.

5.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said step of transmitting an update occurs in real time relative to said step of receiving a bid.

6.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said at least one web browser is the same as said web browser.

7.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said update does not include the value of said bid.

8.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of qualifying bidders to participate in said bidding session.

9.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of qualifying a subset of bidders to participate in at least one additional round of bidding;

10.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of inviting bidders to participate in said bidding session.

11.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of transmitting said update comprises transmitting data representative of:

an identity of a bidder;

a time said bid was received by said bidding session server;

the value of said bid;

a ranking of all bids received by said bidding session server; and

a time remaining in said bidding session.

12.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said bidding session server and said remote terminal are located on opposite sides of a firewall.

13.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said connection establishing step comprises:

transmitting a connection builder from said bidding session server to a random access memory in said remote terminal;

sending a request to said connection builder to identify an external communications channel for said remote terminal; and

opening said external communications channel.

14.   (Original) A method of conducting a bidding session, comprising the steps of:

establishing a communications channel between a bidding session server and a web browser residing on a remote terminal located on the opposite side of a firewall;

transmitting bidding session status information to said web browser through said firewall via said communications channel;

receiving a bid from said web browser via said communications channel;

extending the duration of said bidding session in response to receiving said bid;

transmitting an update of said bidding session status information to at least one web browser residing on at least one remote terminal, wherein said update has not been requested by said at least one web browser;

qualifying a subset of bidders to participate in at least one additional round of bidding;

wherein said update does not include the value of said bid; and

wherein said bidding session status information comprises at least two kinds of products to be put to bid simultaneously.

15.   (Withdrawn) A method for conducting bidding sessions for a plurality of clients, comprising the steps of:

providing a memory area, coupled to a centralized bidding session server infrastructure, for storing bidding session-related data for each of said plurality of clients;

providing a security means for preventing unauthorized access to said bidding session-related data;

under control of said security means, providing authorized access to said bidding session-related data for one of said plurality of clients by a bidding session administrator, wherein said authorized access does not allow said bidding session administrator to access said bidding session-related data for another of said plurality of clients; and

wherein said bidding session administrator sets up a bidding session on said centralized bidding session server infrastructure on behalf of said one of said plurality of clients.

16.   (Withdrawn) The method of claim 15, wherein said step of setting up a bidding session comprises:

providing authorized access to said bidding session by qualified participants; and

specifying a set of bidding session details.

17.   (Withdrawn) The method of claim 15, wherein said set of bidding session details comprises one or more of the following:

a bidding session sponsor,

a bidding session objective,

a bidding session format,

a bidding session date,

a bidding session timer,

a product being put to bid,

a product specification,

a required quantity,

a contract duration,

a contract delivery requirement,

a contract performance penalty,

a starting bid,

a bidding unit,

a minimum bid increment,

a start time for bidding,

an end time for bidding,

a new bid time extension value,

whether bid values are hidden,

a number of total bidding rounds,

a maximum number of bidders and

a minimum number of bidders.

18.   (Withdrawn) The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of providing benchmark information for a plurality of bidding sessions conducted on said centralized bidding session infrastructure.

19.   (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18, wherein said benchmark information comprises data representative of:

an average gain achieved by others in a particular industry;

an average gain achieved by others for a particular product; and

a bidding history for a product.

20.   (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18, wherein said benchmark information comprises data representative of:

an average savings achieved by others in a particular industry;

an average savings achieved by others for a product; and

a bidding history for a product.

21.   (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18, wherein said benchmark information does not include the identity of any one of said plurality of clients.

22.   (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18, wherein said benchmark information does not include the identity of any bidders participating in said plurality of bidding sessions.

23.   (Original) An apparatus for conducting a bidding session, comprising:

means for establishing a communications channel with a web browser residing on a remote terminal;

means for transmitting bidding session status information to said web browser via said communications channel;

means for receiving a bid from said web browser via said communications channel; and

responsive to said means for receiving, means for transmitting an update of said bidding session status information to at least one web browser residing on at least one remote terminal, wherein said update has not been requested by said at least one web browser.

24.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein said bidding session status information comprises data representative of at least one of the following:

a bidding session sponsor,

a bidding session objective,

a bidding session format,

a bidding session date,

a bidding session timer,

a product being put to bid,

a product specification,

a required quantity,

a contract duration,

a contract delivery requirement,

a contract performance penalty,

a starting bid,

a last bid,

a bidding rank,

a bidding unit,

a minimum bid increment,

a start time for bidding,

an end time for bidding,

a new bid time extension value,

whether bid values are hidden,

a current bidding round number,

a number of total bidding rounds,

a number of bidders,

a bidder identification, and

a bidding history.

25.　　(Original) The apparatus of claim 23, further comprising means, responsive to said receiving means, for extending the duration of a bidding session a predetermined period of time.

26.　　(Original) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein said means for transmitting an update responds to said means for receiving a bid in real time.

27.　　(Original) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein said at least one web browser is the same as said web browser.

28.　　(Original) The apparatus of claim 23, further comprising means for qualifying bidders to participate in said bidding session.

29.　　(Original) The apparatus of claim 23, further comprising means for qualifying a subset of bidders to participate in at least one additional round of bidding.

30.　　(Original) The apparatus of claim 23, further comprising means for inviting bidders to participate in said bidding session.

31.　　(Original) The apparatus of claim 23, further comprising:

a bidding engine;

means for monitoring said bidding session; and

means for transmitting messages between said bidding session supervisor component and at least one web browser residing on at least one remote terminal.

32.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein said bidding session supervisor component and said remote terminal are located on opposite sides of a firewall.

33.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein said bidding status information comprises at least two kinds of products to be put to bid simultaneously.

34.   (Original) An apparatus for conducting a bidding session, comprising:

a connection builder configured to establish a communications channel with a web browser residing on a remote terminal;

a first transmitter, wherein said first transmitter is configured to send bidding session status information to said web browser via said communications channel;

a receiver that receives a bid from said web browser via said communications channel; and

a second transmitter, responsive to said receiver, wherein said second transmitter is configured to send an update of said bidding session status information to at least one web browser residing on at least one remote terminal, wherein said update has not been requested by said at least one web browser.

35.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 34, wherein said bidding session status information comprises data representative of at least one of the following:

a bidding session sponsor,

a bidding session objective,

a bidding session format,

a bidding session date,

a bidding session timer,

a product being put to bid,

a product specification,

a required quantity,

a contract duration,

a contract delivery requirement,

a contract performance penalty,

a starting bid,

a last bid,

a bidding rank,

a bidding unit,

a minimum bid increment,

a start time for bidding,

an end time for bidding,

a new bid time extension value,

whether bid values are hidden,

a current bidding round number,

a number of total bidding rounds,

a number of bidders,

a bidder identification, and

a bidding history.

36. (Original) The apparatus of claim 34, wherein, responsive to said receiver, the duration of said bidding session is extended a predetermined period of time.

37. (Original) The apparatus of claim 34, wherein said update is transmitted to said at least one web browser in real time.

38. (Original) The apparatus of claim 34, wherein said at least one web browser is the same as said web browser.

39. (Original) The apparatus of claim 34, wherein said second transmitter is the same as said first transmitter.

40. (Original) The apparatus of claim 34, further comprising a qualifier component, said qualifier component being configured to qualify bidders to participate in said bidding session.

41.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 34, further comprising a qualifier component, said qualifier component being configured to qualify a subset of bidders to participate in at least one additional round of bidding.

42.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 34, further comprising notification component, said notification component being configured to invite bidders to participate in said bidding session.

43.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 34, further comprising:

a bidding engine;

a bidding session supervisor component configured to monitor said bidding session; and

a messaging system, said messaging system being configured to transmit messages between said bidding session supervisor component and at least one web browser residing on at least one remote terminal.

44.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 43, wherein said bidding session supervisor component and said remote terminal are located on opposite sides of a firewall.

45.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 34, wherein said bidding status information comprises at least two kinds of products to be put to bid simultaneously.

46.   (Original) An apparatus for conducting a bidding session, comprising:

a connection builder configured to establish a communications channel with a web browser residing on a remote terminal located on the opposite side of a firewall;

a bidding engine;

a bidding session supervisor component configured to monitor said bidding session; and

a messaging system, wherein said messaging system transmits messages between said bidding session supervisor component and said remote terminal.